

6/27/24 Thursday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada's 2023 Wildfires Produced Four Times More Emissions Than Planes - Study

The 2023 wildfire season burned a whopping 16.5 million hectares of land compared to an average 2.5 million hectares of land that are typically burned in Canada per year. And the study's authors calculated that the forest burned a total of nearly 30,000 square miles (77,574 sq km) and made up 27% of global tree cover loss last year.

Canada's wildfires last year smashed records for the largest area burned in the country's history. Another record the wildfires broke includes the highest carbon emissions in record for the country. The 2023 wildfires emitted nearly 480 megatonnes of carbon - almost five-times the average for the past 20 years and made up 23% of the total global wildfire carbon emissions that year, The Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service ([CAMS](#)) reported.

World Resources Institute and the University of Maryland researchers sought to find out how damaging impacts from the Canadian wildfires last year. They believe the fires put about 3.28 billion tons (2.98 metric tons) of heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the air, [The Guardian](#) reported citing a study published in Thursday's Global Change Biology.

The researchers found that the fire produced nearly four times as much carbon emissions as airplanes do in a year, which is about the same amount of carbon dioxide that about 647 million cars create for the environment in a year, The Guardian said citing data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Forests "remove a lot of carbon from the atmosphere and that gets stored in their branches, their trunks, their leaves and kind of in the ground as well. So when they burn all the carbon that's stored within them gets released back into the atmosphere," explained James MacCarthy, the study's lead author and a research associate with WRI's Global Forest Watch.

While the forest will eventually grow back and help isolate carbon in the future, it will take decades to do so, said Jacob Bendix, a Syracuse University geography and environment professor who was not a part of the study. At least four experts who spoke to The Guardian said that climate change played a crucial role in Canada's extreme wildfire last year; as the planet grows warmer, fires become more common.

The fires also had a disastrous impact on the environment as well. They significantly impacted the air quality across the Northern Hemisphere, including parts of Europe and China, [Earth.com](#) reported citing a study from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics (IAP).

"There were photographs from New York City in July in news outlets around the world that showed the city trapped in an almost unbreathable orange haze like something out of a dystopian movie," said Zhe Wang, whose study found a marked deterioration of air quality across the planet's Northern Hemisphere.

The wildfires resulted in unprecedented levels of PM2.5 which are fine particulate matter with diameters of 2.5 microns or less that are harmful to a person's health. The fires also destroyed Canada's forest ecosystems, including habitats, vegetation and food sources for wildlife.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Pushes the Envelope on Press Freedom, Nuclear Threat

One analyst sees parallels between the deterioration of press freedoms and the crumbling of the international framework designed to prevent nuclear war.

Press freedom advocates are celebrating the release of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange from Belmarsh Prison in London. The maverick journalist spent more than five years in the notorious detention facility with little contact with the outside world following seven years of isolation in the UK's Ecuadorian embassy. His newfound freedom grants Assange the ability to rebuild his life, spend time with his family and, perhaps one day, return to his publishing activities.

But the ordeal has done significant damage to Assange's health as well as the ability of journalists around the world to do their work without fear of state repression, said activist Dr. Margaret Flowers. Flowers offered insight on the development on [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Wednesday](#), drawing parallels between the erosion of press freedoms and the deterioration of international norms designed to prevent the possibility of nuclear war.

"We should recognize that this is a victory," said the co-founder of Popular Resistance of Assange's release from prison. "The United States was hoping that they could bring Assange here or that he would die in prison in Belmarsh, and that they would send a chilling message to everyone around the world. It's because of the activism of so many people that Assange is today."

"But forcing him to plead to a felony when he did not commit a crime... doesn't set a positive legal precedent that we need, which is that journalists, publishers, publish classified material all the time and that the Espionage Act should not apply to them," she added. "Caitlin Johnstone, who wrote [the article in the Greenville Post](#), makes some really valid points that Assange was tortured. His health has deteriorated. He has lost all of these years of his life, years of life with his children and his wife, and that he should also be compensated for what has been done to him."

"So justice has definitely not been served in this, but this was not something we expected, that he would be freed. So this is a victory."

Flowers noted that activists in the United Kingdom are pressing lawmakers to pass legislation safeguarding against attempts by the United States to pursue journalists like Assange on British soil in the future.

The erosion of civil liberties takes place as the world fears it could find itself in a nuclear war amid armed conflict and the reemergence of tensions between Russia and the West. The United States has worked to weaken international agreements designed to prevent a nuclear exchange, host Wilmer Leon noted, going back to the George W. Bush administration [allowing](#) the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) to expire.

Leon also faulted the administration of former President Bill Clinton, who escalated tensions by expanding NATO after previous assurances by the United States it would not expand east of Germany.

"Of course [US President Joe] Biden has done nothing about the Iran agreement, which he promised that he would reinstate... during his campaign," Flowers noted. "It was under the

Obama administration that the US started this trillion-dollar program to upgrade the nuclear weapons. And there's actually a mindset in Washington, DC, that we could launch 'limited nuclear strikes' or tactical nuclear strikes. This is madness. If we began a nuclear war, it's going to be devastating for the world."

"Russia kept saying, 'these are our red lines. Let's talk about it. Let's work something out,'" she noted, claiming the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia could have been avoided. "It was the Western powers that prevented that from happening... We're not seeing any rational activity coming from the United States to back down and say, 'oh yeah, you know, this is going in a bad direction. Let's do something to resolve this.'"

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

'Putin Will Not Take the Bait': Russia Will Respond Prudently to Crimea Attack

Analyst Regis Tremblay also noted the long historic relationship between Moscow and Kiev, which was formalized more than a century before the United States' founding.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will not be goaded into a reckless and impulsive response to Ukraine's killing of Russian civilians in Crimea, said filmmaker Regis Tremblay, but will carefully consider its options as it works to construct a multipolar world order.

The American documentarian, who now lives in the Crimean city of Yalta, responded to Sunday's attack on [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program](#).

"In 2014, an overwhelming number of people in Crimea voted to return to the Russian Federation, where they have been since the time of Catherine the Great, at the time of our American Revolution. And so, to talk about Crimea as being the focus of Ukrainian attacks, I would like to dispel this lie and this myth once and for all," said Tremblay, rejecting the notion that Russia's reintegration of the peninsula was the ultimate cause of the current conflict with Ukraine.

"This has been a war – a declared war – by the United States of America on Russia," he insisted. "Its stated, publicized foreign policy goal, repeated over and over, has been the strategic defeat of Russia. This has never had anything to do with Ukrainians' freedom or democracy. Ukraine has been a pawn."

Mykhailo Podolyak, the chief advisor to Volodymyr Zelensky, caused controversy this week with comments calling Crimea "a large military camp" populated by Russian "civilian occupiers." Crimea has been culturally and geographically considered part of Russia for centuries until 1954, when then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev placed the territory under the administration of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

But the peninsula remained joined with Russia as part of the Soviet Union, only becoming separated from it during its collapse. Khrushchev's transfer of the territory commemorated the 300-year anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement, the 1654 pact that formalized a political union between Ukraine with Russia. The peninsula maintained key military significance for Moscow, hosting its storied Black Sea Fleet.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 left millions of ethnic Russian people living in its constituent republics separated from Russia, causing Putin to [describe](#) its demise as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.”

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called Podolyak’s controversial comments “reminiscent of the Nazi German attitude to Crimea,” suggesting the Ukrainian official wished to “cleanse” the territory of its ethnic Russian inhabitants. Host Garland Nixon faulted US President Joe Biden for his alliance with Kiev’s nationalist government, claiming the United States is attempting to “militarize” various countries to protect its own hegemony.

“Many people are not able to connect what’s been happening in the Donbass since 2014 – that’s 10 years now – which is a very slow motion genocide,” said Tremblay. “The killing of innocent civilians. It’s directly connected to the killing of more than 20,000 innocent people in Palestine at the hands of Israel and their backers, the United States. The United States is complicit in both of these atrocities. It’s barbaric.”

Nevertheless, Tremblay noted that “Putin has never acted impulsively.”

“Will Russia respond? Yes, certainly it will respond, but not in a way that will trigger World War Three,” said the filmmaker. “President Putin has made it very clear that he is not going to do anything that would inadvertently trigger a nuclear war between the United States and Russia. Putin will respond asymmetrically as he is doing.”

“Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister, has been traveling throughout Asia and through Africa signing agreements, long-term agreements for development, for strategic partnerships and for military partnerships,” he noted. “This is, to me, how Russia is responding to the neverending United States escalation on Russia. Putin will not take the bait.”

“This is a very high risk, long-term vision,” Tremblay concluded. “They’re looking long-term, completely believing that the hegemon is in rapid decline, and that their vision of a new world order is based on international law. It’s based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. It’s based on the sovereignty of all nations. And they do not want to risk this future world that they envision with some kind of an irrational, knee-jerk reaction that triggers the end of the world.”

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

A Debate Between 'Two Senior Citizens': Biden & Trump to Debate for the White House

The debate is scheduled to last for 90 minutes with no studio audience and two commercial breaks. It will be a major deciding factor on who to vote for in the upcoming US presidential election for at least 16% of US voters.

US President Joe Biden and his predecessor, former President Donald Trump are scheduled to take part in their first televised debate on Thursday night. Most surveys show the candidates as polling just one point of each other, yet [Forbes](#) reported that a recent New York Times/Siena poll showed Trump about six points ahead of his Democratic competitor.

The poll also found that 60% of respondents believe Trump will perform “very” or “somewhat” well compared to 46% who said the same about Biden. And a separate poll released by Quinnipiac University found that 16% of voters are open to changing who they will vote for in November based on how candidates perform in the debate.

On Thursday, the writer and scholar Gerald Horne sat down with [Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) to discuss the upcoming debate. Sputnik's Wilmer Leon prefaced the interview by suggesting that it will be difficult for Biden to land any criticisms about Trump in the debate, as the controversial figure has seamlessly [skirted accountability](#) for both his offensive rhetoric and accused legal actions - apart from recently in New York, where he became the first former American president to be convicted of [felony crimes](#).

"Speaking of professor Cornel West, he suggests that the choice is between civil war as fomented by Donald J. Trump, or, World War III as fomented by the misguided foreign policies of one [US President] Joseph R. Biden," Dr. Horne suggested.

"To that end, and with regard to gaffes, I do feel that in the last debate between these two senior citizens that Mr. Trump might have put his foot in his mouth when he suggested that the Proud Boys and white supremacist standby. He has yet to explain what he meant by that, although I think we've received a glimmer of his meaning on January 6th, 2021, when certainly they did not standby," the show's guest said.

In September of 2020, then-President Donald Trump was asked during a presidential debate if he would condemn white supremacist and militia groups that were actively present during Black Lives Matter protests.

"Proud Boys, stand back and stand by," Trump said at the [time](#), before later claiming that he did not know who the Proud Boys were. "But I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what, somebody's got to do something about antifa and the left because this is not a right-wing problem."

"They were part of the vanguard with regard to the interruption of the peaceful transfer of power. With regard to Mr. Biden, it seems to me every time he mentions the word Ukraine, every time he mentions the name Zelensky, and perhaps even every time he mentions Israel and Netanyahu, he will be putting his foot in his mouth because these foreign conflicts that give fare to ignite World War III are quite dangerous and quite ominous," the show's guest said.

"Already we see that Mr. Biden has jeopardized the strategic position of US imperialism by driving Russia and China closer together and then driving North Korea and Russia closer together. And so, it seems to me that, however, you define the word gaffe that it's going to be unavoidable for these two men to avoid gaffes this evening."

Sputnik's Garland Nixon then suggested that the US economy plays a major role in who is elected to the White House. He pointed to the 41st president, George H. W. Bush, who received an [89% approval rating](#) in 1991 following the end of the Cold War and US victory in the first Gulf War, but lost his seat in 1992 due to a poor economy and rising unemployment rates.

"For all of the talk that they do tonight and all these things that we may pontificate about, if the economy's good, which it ain't, Biden wins. If it's bad, he's done," said Nixon.

"I should also point out that in 1992, George H.W. Bush faced the revenge tour of his fellow Texan, Ross Perot, who got double digits in terms of the popular vote," Dr. Horne said. "Now, the question for 2024 is whether or not presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., will be as popular in November as he appears to be in June."

"It's unclear whether [Kennedy] take votes from Mr. Biden or more votes from Mr. Trump, but that is an X factor that we'll have to consider, as well as another X factor, if I may, being whether or not presidential candidate Cornel West will take votes away, as the mainstream press would put it, from Joseph R. Biden. These are all X factors going into tonight's debate.

Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was bumped from the upcoming presidential debate between Biden and Trump. CNN requires their debate participants to qualify on enough state ballots to win the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidential election - Kennedy could only win about 100, as of the day of the debate.

Kennedy's campaign filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, accusing CNN of setting requirements that would intentionally exclude him from the debate, [NewsNation](#) reported. Instead, the former president's nephew and member of the Kennedy family will participate in the debate by responding to questions online, followed by an interview with NewsNation.

"Over 70% of Americans want a different choice than Presidents Biden or Trump," Kennedy said in a video he posted on X. "They're tired of voting for the lesser of two evils."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

A debate between 'two senior citizens'

US President Joe Biden and his predecessor, former President Donald Trump are scheduled to take part in their first televised debate on Thursday night. Most surveys show the candidates as polling just one point of each other, yet Forbes reported that a recent New York Times/Siena poll showed Trump about six points ahead of his Democratic competitor. "Speaking of professor Cornel West, he suggests that the choice is between civil war as fomented by Donald J. Trump, or, World War III as fomented by the misguided foreign policies of one [US President] Joseph R. Biden," said the writer and scholar Gerald Horne, who sat down with Sputnik's The Critical Hour to discuss the upcoming debate on Thursday. The poll also found that 60% of respondents believe Trump will perform "very" or "somewhat" well compared to 46% who said the same about Biden. And a separate poll released by Quinnipiac University found that 16% of voters are open to changing who they will vote for in November based on how candidates perform in the debate. "With regard to Mr. Biden, it seems to me every time he mentions the word Ukraine, every time he mentions the name Zelensky, and perhaps even every time he mentions Israel and Netanyahu, he will be putting his foot in his mouth because these foreign conflicts that give fare to ignite World War III are quite dangerous and quite ominous," the show's guest said. 👉
Follow the link for more details

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Debate Performance Leaves Democrats Questioning Future of Biden's Candidacy - Reports

(Updates with more details in paras 6-8)

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's performance during a debate against challenger Donald Trump is leaving some Democrats questioning his viability as the party's nominee, CNN reported, citing Democratic sources.

One source said that it is hard to see how Biden can become the party's nominee, the report said on Thursday.

Another source characterized Biden as "incoherent," the report said.

The sources are also wondering how Biden's performance contrasts with that of Trump.

Biden and Trump are facing off in a CNN-hosted first debate of the 2024 presidential election cycle in Atlanta. Biden has stumbled several times on stage and his disoriented appearance has sparked extensive criticism on social media.

Democrats have discussed replacing Biden with a different nominee if he performs poorly at the debate, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported earlier this month, citing one of Biden's longtime friends.

Democrats see Biden's debate performance as disastrous, The New York Times also reported on Thursday night, citing three veteran Democratic presidential campaign officials.

Biden looked scared on the debate stage, one of the sources reportedly said.

Another source reportedly called Biden's performance an "emperor has no clothes" moment.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Will Release Gershkovich From Russian Jail Quickly

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) –Former US President Donald Trump said during the first presidential debate that he would release journalist Evan Gershkovich, who was accused of espionage in Russia, very quickly.

"As soon as I win the election, I will have that reporter out. He [US President Joe Biden] should have had him out a long time ago," Trump said.

Trump also accused Biden of paying for every American detained abroad. "We always pay \$6 billion every time we have a hostage," he added.

The Sverdlovsk regional court in Russia's Yekaterinburg began the first hearing of Gershkovich on Wednesday.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says 'We Are Very, Very Close to World War III' Because of Biden

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said that President Joe Biden is driving the world to the World War III.

"His policies are so bad. His military policies are insane. They're insane. These are wars that will never end with him. He will drive us into World War Three," Trump said during the first debate of the 2024 US presidential election cycle with Biden on Thursday night.

Trump also said the United States is closer to World War III than anybody can imagine.

"We are very, very close to World War III and he [Biden] is driving us there," Trump added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Biden's 'Horrible' Performance Prompted His Presidential Run

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said during the first presidential debate he wasn't planning on running for president until he saw US President Joe Biden's poor performance.

"I wasn't really going to run until I saw the horrible job he [Biden] did," Trump said during the first presidential debate on Thursday.

Trump added he would be happy to be someplace else, in a nice location, instead of running for president.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Ukraine Not Winning Conflict With Russia

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said Ukraine is not winning its ongoing conflict with Russia and blamed President Joe Biden and "stupid decisions" for the current situation.

"Ukraine is not winning that war," Trump said during the first debate of the 2024 US presidential election cycle with President Joe Biden. "They're running out of people. They're running out of soldiers. They've lost so many people. It's so sad. They've lost so many people, and they've lost those gorgeous cities with the golden domes that are 1,000 years old, all because of him and stupid decisions"

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Calls on Biden to Take Cognitive Test Amid Concerns About His Age

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump called on current officeholder Joe Biden to take a cognitive test amid concerns about their age.

Biden would be 86 at the end of a potential second term as president, whereas Trump would be 82 at the end of a second term in the White House.

"I took two tests, cognitive tests. I aced them, both of them, as you know, we made it public," Trump said during the first debate with Biden in Atlanta on Thursday night. "He took none. I'd like to see him take one, just one, a real easy one."

Biden said that he spent half of his career as a young person in politics, but now he is the oldest.

Trump and Biden went back-and-forth about their respective golf abilities and physical statuses.

"Let's not act like children," Trump said.

Biden responded that Trump is a child.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE - Biden Says US Economy Under Trump in Chaos, Trump Blames Biden for High Inflation

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said during the first presidential debate in Atlanta that the US economy under former President Donald Trump was in chaos, while Trump blamed Biden for high inflation hampering the US economy.

Biden and Trump started off, throwing jabs at each other on the economy. The president argued that his predecessor left him an economy in shambles, while Trump said the economy was the "greatest in the world" before coronavirus pandemic measures.

The two also clashed over who did a better job handling the pandemic.

"The economy collapsed, there were no jobs," Biden said on Thursday night, referring to the crash in employment at the height of the Covid and its climb since then under his presidency to become the best US labor market in more than 50 years.

Trump defended his tax cuts and said that they spurred economic growth and that the U.S. was about to start paying down its debt before he was forced to enact trillions of dollars in Covid relief money.

"He has not done a good job. He's done a poor job, and inflation is killing our country. It is absolutely killing us," Trump said.

Biden hit back and said that Trump just wants to give more tax cuts to the rich, trying to undercut his populist message. He said he took over a US economy that was in chaos under the Trump administration.

As proof, Biden pointed to the 1,000 plus American billionaires in America, who as a result of Trump's tax cuts, are "in a situation where they in fact pay 8.2 percent in taxes".

US tax laws expect the top 1% of earners to be paying an average federal income tax rate of more than 20%, according to an analysis published by the Treasury Department in November.

Trump instead said he helped prevent another Great Depression as the US economy took a big hit from Covid measures. The former president also plans to do away with personal income taxes for Americans and impose maximum tariffs on imported goods, particularly those from China.

Economists have warned that such a move would add enormously to the burden of middle-income-and-below groups, a point that came up during the debate and which Trump denied.

"Not going to drive them higher," the former president said, referring to his plan to both or do away altogether with income taxes.

Until 2019, US inflation grew for more than a decade in opposite fashion to now, with the Fed struggling to get to its 2% per year target in order to stimulate the economy.

The pandemic changed all that, with inflation supercharged by the resulting shutdown of the economy, disruption of supply chains, and trillions of dollars in recovery spending by the government.

By June 2022, the Consumer Price Index hit a four-decade high of 9.1% a year. It came down to current levels of around 3% after the Fed hiked interest rates 11 times between March 2022

and July 2023.

The current range for rates, at between 5.25% and 5.5% is at the highest since 2002, compared with the pre-pandemic low of between zero and 0.25%.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says He, Biden Wasting Time on Debate While Country Being Destroyed

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump during said he and President Joe Biden were wasting time on the debate stage while the country was being destroyed.

"Joe [Biden], our country is being destroyed as you and I sit up here and waste a lot of time on this debate," Trump said late Thursday during his first debate with Biden in the 2024 election contest.

Trump added that if Biden wins the upcoming election, the country won't have a chance to "come out of this rut" and "we probably won't have a country left anymore."

The debate, hosted by CNN in Atlanta, Georgia, kicked off at 09:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT).

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says During Debate With Biden He Fired General Kelly Because 'He Was No Good'

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said he fired Gen. John Kelly because "he was no good" and not because as Biden claimed the general revealed that Trump called dead US soldiers "losers" and "suckers."

"General got fired because he was no good. And if he said that, that's why he made it up," Trump said during the first debate with Biden on Thursday night. "But we have 19 people that said I didn't say it and they are highly respected, much more so than him."

Biden said earlier in the debate that Trump was a "loser and sucker." Biden also said that recently he visited the military cemetery in France where Trump was scheduled to go in 2018 but later canceled his plans.

In 2020, The Atlantic reported that Trump referred to fallen soldiers as "suckers" and "losers" in conversations with staffers - a claim that Trump has repeatedly denied.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Calls Biden 'Manchurian Candidate', Says Biden Gets Money From China

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump accused US President Joe Biden of being paid by China and called him a "Manchurian Candidate."

"He gets paid by China. He is a Manchurian Candidate," Trump said at the presidential debate

organized by CNN on Thursday.

The former president also emphasized that China would own the US if it were allowed to continue its current actions.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

New Chinese Ambassador to Canada Wang Di Says Bilateral Relations at 'Critical Junction'

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - China's newly appointed Ambassador to Canada Wang Di said bilateral relations are at a "critical junction" and the mission ahead will be both glorious and daunting, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The Chinese Embassy in Ottawa hosted on Thursday evening a welcoming reception in honor of Wang, who presented his letter of credence to Canadian Governor General of Mary Simon the previous day.

"Ladies and gentlemen, currently China-Canada relations are at a critical junction. Coming to Canada as the new Chinese ambassador at this time means a glorious mission and a daunting task. I will perform duties with wholehearted dedication and will make every efforts to deepen the traditional friendship between our two peoples," Wang said.

Wang pledged to promote a stable development of Sino-Canadian relations while following the principles of mutual respect and benefit, as well as seeking common ground and putting aside differences.

"I'm deeply convinced that healthy and stable China-Canada relations not only serve our respective development but will also inject more certainty ... to today's world which has brought turbulence and uncertainties," Wang said.

The ambassador recalled the words expressed by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney when visiting China in 1986, who said that Ottawa and Beijing would prove to the world that people of different races and social systems can overcome differences and cooperate on common interests.

China and Canada must draw strength and wisdom from the successful experience of bilateral ties, Wang said.

Both countries must step up to their historical responsibilities to live up to the expectations that their peoples seek and deserve, Wang added.

The ambassador also recalled the words of former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji to his Canadian counterpart Jean Chretien in 1998, who said Canada is China's best friend.

"This is a benchmark set by our predecessors and should become the goal that we strive for today," Wang said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Claims Southern Border More Secure Than Under Trump 'Nonsense' - Ex-US Official

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's claim that the US southern border is more secure under his administration compared to former President Donald Trump's is nonsense, former acting US Customs and Border Protection Deputy Commissioner Ronald Vitiello told Sputnik.

Biden during the first presidential debate in Atlanta falsely claimed that the National Border Patrol Council endorsed him and that his border policy currently has the southern border in better condition than when former President Donald Trump was in office.

"Nonsense," Vitiello said Thursday night. "Media reports have a 40% reduction in encounters since the executive order was signed. That still keeps us at over 1 million [illegal crossings on the southern border] per year."

Vitiello added that even at a lower flow rate thousands of illegal migrants are being released after being encountered on the US southern border and present a threat to US security.

National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik that the group will never endorse Biden and that the US southern border has been in shambles since he took office in 2021.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says He Withdrew US From Paris Accords Over Money

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – Presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump said at the US presidential debate that he pulled out of the Paris climate change accords in 2017 because it was a “rip-off” for the United States.

“The Paris accord was gonna cost us a trillion dollars, and China nothing and Russia nothing and India nothing. It was a rip-off of the United States, and I ended it because I didn't want to waste that money,” Trump said on Thursday night.

In June 2017, Trump announced that he would withdraw the US from the 2015 Paris Agreement on mitigating climate change.

The decision took effect in November 2020, making the US the first country in the world to formally withdraw from the agreement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Debate Performance Leaves Democrats Questioning Future of Biden's Candidacy - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's performance during a debate against challenger Donald Trump is leaving some Democrats questioning his viability as the party's nominee, CNN reported, citing Democratic sources.

One source said that it is hard to see how Biden can become the party's nominee, the report said on Thursday.

Another source characterized Biden as “incoherent,” the report said. The sources are wondering how Biden's performance contrasts with Trump's, the report said.

Biden and Trump are facing off in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta — the first debate of the 2024 presidential election cycle. Biden has stumbled several times on stage, and his appearance has sparked extensive criticism on social media.

Democrats have discussed replacing Biden with a different nominee if he performs poorly at the debate, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported earlier this month, citing one of Biden's longtime friends.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Border Patrol Union on Biden Claim That Group Endorsed Him: Border in Shambles Under Biden

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik that the group will never endorse President Joe Biden and that the US southern border has been in shambles since he took office in 2021.

Biden during the first presidential debate in Atlanta falsely claimed that the National Border Patrol Council endorsed him and that his border policy currently has the southern border in better condition than when former President Donald Trump was in office.

"Our borders have been in shambles since day one of the Biden administration," Del Cueto said Thursday night. "The Border Patrol union never has nor never will endorse President Biden. We are fully behind Donald J. Trump."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Blames Pelosi, Washington Mayor Bowser for January 6 Attack on US Capitol

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump blamed during the first debate with President Joe Biden former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser for the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol building.

"Nancy Pelosi, if you just watched the news from two days ago, on tape to her daughter who is a documentary filmmaker they say, what she's saying, 'Oh, no, it's my responsibility, I was responsible for this,'" Trump said on Thursday night.

Trump also said he offered Pelosi 10,000 soldiers or National Guard troops to ensure security at the Capitol and she turned them down.

"By the way, the mayor in writing turned it down, the mayor of DC," Trump added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Biden Could Be Convicted Once He Gets Out Of Office

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump during the first presidential debate suggested that President Joe Biden might become a convicted felon after his term ends.

"He [Biden] could be a convicted felon as soon as he gets out of office," Trump said on Thursday.

Biden added that allegations of his misconduct are "outrageous" and "simply a lie" and that seeking retribution against Americans is wrong.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

border patrol union on Biden's claim that group endorsed him: our borders have been in shambles, we will never endorse him

Sputnik

6/27/2024 9:49:19 PM -04:00

Trump: If US Had President Who Was Respected By Putin, He Would Not Have Invaded Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – If the United States had a real president who was respected by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia would have never started its special military operation in Ukraine, former US President Donald Trump said during the first US presidential debate.

"If we had a real president, a president that was respected by Putin, he would have never invaded Ukraine," Trump said on Thursday.

He also called President Joe Biden "the worst commander-in-chief," adding that "our veterans and our soldiers cannot stand this guy."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Calls Trump 'Looser, Sucker' During First Presidential Debate

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has called former President Donald Trump a "looser" and "sucker" during their first presidential debate.

"My son was not a loser. Was not a sucker. You're the sucker. You're the loser," Biden said on Thursday.

Biden refuted Trump's claim that he doesn't care about US veterans, asserting that veterans are better off under his administration.

Biden also said that recently he visited the military cemetery in France where Trump was scheduled to go in 2018 but later canceled the plans.

In 2020, the Atlantic reported that Trump referred to fallen soldiers as "suckers" and "losers" in

conversations with staffers, a claim Trump has repeatedly denied.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Suggests Russia Intends to Take Over Poland, Belarus if Successful in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to take over countries like Poland and Belarus if Russia proves victorious in the conflict in Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said during a CNN debate against challenger Donald Trump.

"What do you think happens to Poland? What do you think [unintelligible] Belarus? What do you think happens to those NATO countries?" Biden said on Thursday.

Putin wants to reform the Soviet Union, Biden said.

Putin never would have launched a special military operation in Ukraine if the United States had a respectable president, Trump said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says What Biden Did During His Time in Office 'Absolutely Criminal'

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said during the first presidential debate in Atlanta that President Joe Biden's actions while in office have been "absolutely criminal."

"What this man [Biden] has done is absolutely criminal," Trump said on Thursday night.

Trump added that it is a shame regarding what has happened to the standing of the United States in the last four years.

The debate, hosted by CNN in Atlanta, Georgia, kicked off at 9:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT).

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Claims Hamas Would Not Have Invaded Israel Under His Watch

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – Donald Trump claimed during the US presidential debate on Thursday that Hamas would have never invaded Israel if he had been in office.

"Israel would have never been invaded in a million years by Hamas. You know why? Because Iran was broke with me. I wouldn't let anybody do business with them. They ran out of money...They had no money for Hamas; they had no money for anything; no money for terror," Trump said on the issue of wars.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Terms of Putin's Ukraine Peace Plan Not Acceptable

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said during the first US presidential debate in Atlanta that the terms of Russian President Vladimir Putin's peace plan for Ukraine are not acceptable to him.

"No, they're not acceptable," Trump said Thursday night. Trump said if he's elected to the White House, he'll be able to broker a peace plan between Russia and Ukraine before he would officially take office in January 2025.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Supports Legal Use of Abortion Pill, Backs US Supreme Court Ruling

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump said he will not seek to ban abortion medications if he is re-elected to a second term in the White House.

"I will not block the abortion pill," Trump said in the first of two presidential debates between him and incumbent President Joe Biden on Thursday night.

The Democrats have made abortion a key issue claiming that Trump wants to take control of reproductive rights away from women and ban all legal abortion across the United States.

However, Trump said that was not and had never been his position and he believed that the issue of abortion should be decided by state legislatures on an individual basis across the United States.

Trump also said he supported the US Supreme Court ruling that use of the abortion pill was legal.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Claims US Has 'Largest Number of Terrorists' Entering Borders

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – Donald Trump claimed during the US presidential debate that the US has the largest number of terrorists coming into the country.

"We have the largest number of terrorists coming into our country right now, all terrorists, all over the world, not just in South America, all over the world, they come from the Middle East, everywhere," Trump said on Thursday.

Trump claimed that the US had the "safest border in history" during his former presidency and all Biden had to do was leave it be.

Meanwhile, Biden said 40% fewer people have been entering the country illegally since he took office.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Americans Living in 'Rats' Nest' Due to Biden Border Policies

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - People in the United States are living in a "rats' nest" because of President Joe Biden's border policies, former President Donald Trump said during the first presidential debate in Atlanta.

"We are living right now in a rats' nest. They are killing our people in New York, in California, in every state in the union, because we don't have borders anymore," Trump said on Thursday night.

Biden's border policies are allowing migrants to enter the US and commit crimes, including murder, Trump said.

Biden retorted that everything Trump said on the matter was a lie.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Under Biden's Leadership, US No Longer Respected in World

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump accused President Joe Biden of bringing the United States to a point where the world's nations no longer respect it.

"We're no longer respected as a country. They don't respect our leadership. They don't respect the United States anymore," Trump said during the first presidential debate with Biden. "All of the things he has done, we've become like a third world nation. And it's a shame."

The debate, hosted by CNN and taking place in Atlanta, Georgia, kicked off at 09:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT).

According to a Gallup poll released earlier on Thursday, US voters favor Donald Trump over Joe Biden as their next president across several measures.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Says US Economy Under Trump in Chaos, Trump Blames Biden for High Inflation

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said during the first presidential debate in Atlanta that the US economy under former President Donald Trump was in chaos, while Trump blamed Biden for high inflation hampering the US economy.

"He has not done a good job. He's done a poor job, and inflation is killing our country. It is absolutely killing us," Trump said on Thursday night.

Trump said he helped prevent another Great Depression as the US economy took a big hit from the coronavirus pandemic measures.

Biden said he took over a US economy that was in chaos under the Trump administration.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Falsely Claims No US Troops Died Abroad During His Presidency

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden falsely claimed during the first presidential debate with his challenger Donald Trump that no US troops died abroad during his presidency.

"Truth is, I'm the only president... that doesn't have any, this decade, troops dying anywhere in the world," Biden said on Thursday.

On August 26, 2021, 13 US military servicemembers died during the withdrawal from Afghanistan, due to a suicide bombing at the airport in Kabul.

Three US troops were also killed by a drone attack in Jordan on January 28, 2024.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

First US Presidential Debate Kicks Off in Atlanta But Biden, Trump Did Not Shake Hands

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The first US presidential debate between Presidents Joe Biden and his challenger Donald Trump started on Thursday night in Atlanta, Georgia, but the political rivals did not shake hands.

The debate started off with a question on the US economy. Both candidates seem, so far, calm and focused in answering the question.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Navy Pays Kansas Firm \$249Mln for Construction Projects Across Pacific - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Navy is paying a Kansas-based company almost a quarter of a billion dollars to construct a new missile defense system to defend US bases and installations from Hawaii across the Western Pacific and in Australia and Japan, the Defense Department announced.

"Black & Veatch-Jacobs [of] Leawood, Kansas is awarded a \$249 million ... architect-engineer (A-E) contract for ... construction of missile defense system and supporting infrastructure projects," the Defense Department said in a press release on Thursday.

Work on the projects will be performed in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (70%), Hawaii (20%), Australia (5%), Japan (5%), the release said.

Work on the construction projects will be overseen by the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Navy Pays 10 Companies \$250Mln for Okinawa Construction Projects - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has awarded ten construction companies a \$250 million construction contract for work on the Japanese island of Okinawa, the Defense Department announced.

"[The ten companies] are awarded a combined \$250 million ... construction contract for repairs, alternation, construction and demolition work to shore facilities," the Defense Department said in a press release on Thursday.

Work on the contract will be performed at Okinawa, Japan, over the next eight years and is expected to be completed by June 2032, the release said.

The release identified the companies as WITCO Industries of Okinawa; American Engineering Corporation of Okinawa; Kyunan of Miyazaki; Mitomo of Yokohama; Nihon Meccs of Chuo-Ku; and Ohna Denken [of] Okinawa, Japan.

The remaining companies were named as Onaka Gumi of Okinawa; Seikitokyu Kogyo of Kunigami-Gun; TECC Corporation of Yokohama; and Yabu Doken-Hexel Works of Urasoe, the release said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Boeing Completes Upgrades on 2 US Navy F/A-18 Jets Ahead of Schedule - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Boeing announced in a press release that it has completed upgrades on two US Navy F/A-18 Super Hornets ahead of schedule.

"Boeing has completed the upgrade and life extension of the first two service life modification (SLM) F/A-18 Block III Super Hornets, delivering them to the US Navy one month ahead of schedule from St. Louis and two months ahead of schedule from San Antonio," the release said on Thursday.

The upgraded jets have the same capabilities as Super Hornets being delivered from Boeing's new-build production line, the release said.

"Our success in meeting the accelerated timeline is proof our service life modification game plan is working," Boeing SLM Director Faye Dixon said in the release.

Block III upgrades include a large area display and more powerful computing through tactical targeting network technology and a distributed targeting processor-networked open mission systems processor, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Accusations of Russia's Alleged Violations of Religious Rights Unacceptable – Antonov

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – US accusations of alleged violations of religious rights in Russia are unacceptable and part of Washington's attempts to destabilize the situation in the country, Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov said.

"We consider the accusations of Russia's alleged violation of the rights of believers and our lack of interfaith harmony unacceptable. It is obvious that hiding behind a human rights agenda, Washington is once again trying in vain to destabilize the situation in our country and provoke discord between representatives of different ethnic groups and religions," Antonov told reporters on Friday.

The US State Department on Wednesday unveiled its annual report on international religious freedom, which accused Russia of violating religious rights.

Antonov emphasized that Washington's supposed concern for religious freedom leads to significant problems.

"The sectarian tensions provoked by the Americans in the Middle East, North Africa and the former Yugoslavia are sad confirmation of this," he said.

The Russian ambassador pointed out that the US routinely ignores religious rights abuses in Ukraine.

"The US does not consider it necessary to condemn the excesses of the Zelensky regime against the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), routinely calling on the ministers of the UOC for dialogue," he said.

Antonov also noted that State Department does not include in its a report a specific chapter about the religious situation in the United States, where the human rights situation is full of flaws.

He highlighted the growing polarization of American society, antisemitism, Islamo-phobia, police brutality and the propagation of the neoliberal agenda to the detriment of traditional family and religious values. Multiple hate groups are allowed to march through the streets of American cities with Nazi symbols and anti-Jewish slogans, he noted.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Awards Lockheed \$1.5Bln Contract to Maintain, Support F-35 Jet Fleet - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin Aeronautics has received a more than \$1.5 billion US Navy contract to provide more logistics support and pilot training, for delivered F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters, the US Defense Department announced.

"Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company [of] Fort Worth, Texas is awarded a \$1,564,262,634 contract," the Defense Department said in a press release on Thursday. "This contract procures logistics support, to include ground maintenance activities, action request solution, depot activities [and] automatic logistics information system operations and maintenance."

Under the contract, the company will also provide the aircraft fleet with reliability and maintainability, supply chain management, pilot training, maintainer training and training system sustainment, the release said.

The contract will serve F-35 jets operating with the US Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy as well

as Foreign Military Sales customers, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Faces Severe Bear Market Due to Prolonged Growth and Historic Debt - Investor Rogers

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) -The US, with its unprecedentedly gigantic debt, is poised for a potentially severe bear market ahead, legendary US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"The next bear market in the US has to be very bad because good times have been going so long, but also because of the debt. The debt is the highest in American history," Rogers said.

"We have never had such gigantic debt in our history. So the next bear market has to be serious, very bad."

Rogers observed that global stock markets have been rising since 2008-2009, the longest period in history, with many reaching unprecedented highs.

"When we have problems, they are going to be very bad because so many markets have been so high and there's so much debt now," Rogers said. "I don't know when it's going to come to an end, but I do know it is going to come to an end. When it comes to an end, it's going to be very very serious."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Set to Partially Release Suspended Bomb Shipment to Israel - Reports

The United States is expected to soon partially lift a hold on bombs being supplied to Israel amid the potential of a new front opening in the conflict against Hezbollah, Axios reported, citing sources familiar with the matter.

The report said on Thursday that the United States will soon deliver some 1,700 500-pound bombs that were part of a weapons shipment to Israel put on hold in April over concerns Israel would use them in densely populated areas in Rafah.

The deliveries are expected to be made once Israel's operation ends in Rafah. The Biden administration is still withholding a weapons shipment to Israel of 1,800 2,000-pound bombs.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Administration Set to Release Suspended Bomb Shipment to Israel After April Hold Over Rafah Operation Concerns-Reports

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Unable to Confirm Reports About Israel Supplying Ukraine With Patriots

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - A US Defense Department spokesperson on Thursday was unable to verify reports claiming that the United States was in talks with Israel about supplying Ukraine with additional Patriot air defense systems.

Earlier in the day, the Financial Times reported that the United States is in talks with Israeli and Ukrainian officials to send Patriot missile systems from Israel to Ukraine

"No, we have no idea where that came from," the spokesperson told Sputnik when asked to confirm the report.

According to the report, the deal would likely involve transferring the Patriot systems from Israel to the United States before sending them to Ukraine.

In April, Israel said that it planned to begin retiring its eight Patriot batteries and replacing them with newer systems.

The White House and State Department did not immediately respond to Sputnik's request for comment on this matter.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

- * The Russian military launched a group strike targeting Ukrainian airfields where Kiev plans to station Western-supplied aircraft, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Thursday.

- * The Russian armed forces have struck a temporary deployment point of Ukrainian troops near Kupyansk, and the attack also destroyed two pieces of equipment, the coordinator of pro-Russian underground network in Nikolayev (also known as Mykolaiv), Sergei Lebedev, told Sputnik.

- * NATO does not view itself as a party to the conflict in Ukraine, US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said.

- * Initiatives on the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict that ignore Russia's position will not lead to the desired results, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

- * The United States is in talks with Israeli and Ukrainian officials to send Patriot missile systems from Israel to Ukraine, US corporate media reported.

BOLIVIA

- * Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a telephone conversation with Bolivian Foreign Minister Celinda Sosa Lunda and condemned the attempted military coup in La Paz, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

- * The coup attempt in Bolivia could have been provoked from the outside and caused by a desire to plunder the country's natural resources, Bolivian Defense Minister Edmundo Novillo told Sputnik.

* Bolivian police have detained at least a dozen military officers involved in organizing the attempted coup in the country, Bolivian Minister of Government Carlos Eduardo Castillo said.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

* Time will likely come when changes will be made to Russia's nuclear doctrine, considering the experience of the special military operation, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Thursday.

* NATO has been increasing the risk of nuclear arms race and nuclear conflicts, this will meet resistance from the international community, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said.

WESTERN SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

* The European Union and Ukraine on Thursday signed an agreement on joint security commitments, according to a live broadcast on the European Commission's website.

* The security obligations on the European Union to Ukraine will be valid as long as Kiev follows the "European path," the joint EU-Ukraine security agreement said.

* Ukraine committed in a joint security agreement with the EU to strengthen the transparency and accountability in relation to EU aid.

US ECONOMY

* The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees the potential for one US rate cut in 2024 and further cuts in 2025, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

* The IMF said that the United States should engage with major trading partners to address unfair trade practices, supply chain fragilities and national security concerns.

* The IMF said that the US general government debt is set to top 140% of GDP by 2032 if current policies continue.

* The IMF said that inflation in the United States is expected to return to the 2% per year target by mid-2025.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT: PREVIEW - Trump, Biden Set to Clash in First Debate of 2024 US Presidential Election Cycle

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump and current officeholder Joe Biden are set to clash on Thursday evening in the first debate of the 2024 US presidential election cycle.

The two leading candidates will participate in a 90-minute debate hosted by CNN in Atlanta, Georgia. Trump and Biden previously competed on the debate stage during the 2020 presidential election.

The debate could set the tone for the remainder of the race leading up to Election Day on November 5. However, the debate could also reportedly mark the end of Biden's campaign.

Democrats have discussed replacing Biden with a different nominee if he performs poorly at the

debate, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported, citing one of Biden's longtime friends.

Democratic Party leaders and donors have expressed serious concerns about Biden's ability to defeat Trump, the report said. California Governor Gavin Newsom and Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker could potentially replace Biden, the report added.

Biden spent the days leading up to the debate privately preparing at Camp David. Biden allegedly attempted to convince CNN to allow the candidates to sit during the debate, although the network denied the allegations. Trump has said that he prefers the candidates remain standing during the debate.

Biden will likely win the debate if he does not "lose track completely," former merchant banker and business analyst Martin Hutchinson told Sputnik. However, the debate will not matter much, as opinions are already well set on both sides of the aisle, Hutchinson said.

A plurality of likely voters in the United States, 47%, believe Trump will win the debate, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll. Thirty-seven percent (37%) believe Biden will win and 16% are unsure, the poll report said.

Trump campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said that Trump is going into a "hostile environment," considering that CNN moderators Jake Tapper and Dana Bash have been longtime critics of the former president. CNN cut Leavitt off in the middle of an interview on Monday when she raised concerns about the moderators.

Biden and Trump will likely use the debate stage to launch personal attacks against each other, political commentator Sam Hussein told Sputnik. Hussein said that he also expects Biden to focus some of his rhetoric on abortion, while Trump will criticize the competence of the Biden administration.

Both candidates may avoid talking about the conflict in Israel, given their shared pro-Israel stance is unpopular with many voters, Hussein added.

Former Brown University economics professor Barry Friedman told Sputnik that his expectations for the debate are low. A key question is whether the candidates can find policy issues that appeal to undecided independent voters, such as plans to resolve the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, Friedman said.

CNN declined to allow independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to participate in the debate, due to purportedly failing to meet their criteria to qualify. Kennedy called his exclusion from the debate "undemocratic, un-American, and cowardly," adding that the decision violates US election law.

In May, Kennedy filed a complaint with the US Federal Election Commission (FEC), accusing Biden, Trump and CNN of violating election laws. Kennedy asked the FEC to investigate the matter.

Kennedy is streaming an alternative debate feed, on which he will be answering questions posed to Trump and Biden on the CNN debate stage.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event, for which Kennedy could still qualify.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Government Debt to Exceed 140% of GDP by 2032 if Current Policies Continue – IMF

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that the US general government debt is set to top 140% of GDP by 2032 if current policies continue.

"Specifically, under current policies, the general government debt is expected to rise steadily and exceed 140 percent of GDP by 2032. Similarly, the general government deficit is expected to remain around 2½ percent of GDP above the levels forecast at the time of the 2019 Article IV consultation," the IMF said in the Staff Concluding Statement of the 2024 Article IV Mission.

The US needs to reverse the ongoing increase in public debt-GDP ratio to avoid a growing risk to the American and global economy, the IMF stated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Biden Not Considering Pardon for Assange

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is not considering pardoning WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday.

"No, it's not," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing, when asked whether a pardon for Assange is under consideration or being discussed by Biden.

Earlier this week, a US judge sentenced Assange to time served as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors, ending a 14-year-long legal battle.

Assange faced prosecution under the Espionage Act for obtaining and disclosing classified information that shed light on war crimes and human rights violations committed by US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Considering Sending Israel's Patriot Systems to Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is in talks with Israeli and Ukrainian officials to send Patriot missile systems from Israel to Ukraine, Financial Times reported on Thursday.

Senior US, Israeli and Ukrainian officials have discussed the potential deal, although the arrangement has not been finalized, the report said, citing five people familiar with the talks.

The deal would likely involve transferring the Patriot systems from Israel to the US before sending them to Ukraine, the report said.

In April, Israel said that it planned to begin retiring its eight Patriot batteries and replacing them with newer systems.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

IMF Says US Did Not Take Enough Steps to Mitigate Banking System Vulnerabilities

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The United States has not taken enough actions to mitigate vulnerabilities in its banking system, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday.

"However, concrete actions have been lacking in mitigating the banking system vulnerabilities that came to light in 2023 - including failings in bank supervision, the large share of uninsured deposits, and the risks created by the regulatory 'tailoring' that was undertaken in 2018," the IMF said in a statement.

The IMF urges the United States to fully implement the final components of the Basel III agreement, which introduced new capital buffer requirements that banks must maintain above the minimum capital ratios.

The United States should apply similar regulatory requirements to all banks with US\$100 billion or more in assets and further strengthen supervisory oversight and practices, the statement said.

The IMF recommends re-examining the coverage of deposit insurance and recalibrating bank liquidity requirements and liquidity stress tests, the statement added.

There is also a continuing need to increase the resilience of non-bank mortgage companies, particularly given the critical role they play in servicing a sizable share of US mortgages, according to the statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon, USAID Launch Probes of Aid Delivery Mission Via Temporary Pier Into Gaza – OIG

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have launched a coordinated probe into the humanitarian mission to deliver aid into Gaza via the temporary pier off the coast of the enclave, the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General announced on Thursday.

"The Inspectors General from the Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development have launched coordinated, independent oversight projects related to their agencies' respective roles in the ongoing delivery and distribution of U.S. humanitarian assistance to Gaza through the maritime corridor," the Pentagon watchdog said in a press release.

The Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General will assess the effectiveness of the Pentagon's efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza through the maritime corridor.

The news comes following a series of failures at the \$230 million pier, which has failed to become a reliable route for delivering humanitarian aid to the famine-stricken in Gaza.

The US military put the pier into operation on May 17, but it did not bring much benefit to Gazans. Over a week later, the pier came loose from its moorings amid high waves, and the

deliveries of aid were halted. It took another week to re-anchor it. However, after a few days, the Pentagon again decided to dismantle it due to impending bad weather.

US media reported earlier this month that the Biden administration is planning to completely dismantle the pier in early July after it proved to be ineffective in changing the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Press Group Concerned by CNN's Restricted Press Access for Presidential Debate

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) President Kelly O'Donnell on Thursday urged CNN to allow a press pool reporter attend the entirety of the presidential debate later in the day, citing concerns that the network's control over the candidates' microphones could leave viewers unable to hear everything that goes on in the room.

This is the first debate since the inaugural presidential debate between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960 to not have a live audience.

"Tonight's debate will have no audience present and includes format rules that can silence candidates' microphones," O'Donnell said in a statement. "We don't know how this will play out in real time. A pool reporter is there to observe what is said and done when microphones are off or when either candidate is not seen on camera but may speak, gesture, move or engage in some way."

The WHCA is deeply concerned that CNN has rejected its repeated requests to include the White House travel pool inside the studio, O'Donnell said.

The Biden and Trump campaigns support allowing full press access at the debate, O'Donnell added.

At present, one White House press pool reporter will only be allowed to enter the studio briefly during a commercial break.

President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump will participate in their first 2024 election debate in Atlanta, Georgia, which is scheduled at 09:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT) and hosted by the corporate media network CNN.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Now Good Time to Cut US Debt, Deficit Despite Political Difficulties - IMF Chief

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Current economic conditions make it an opportune moment for the United States to cut its public debt and resulting budget deficit, though politically the decision might be a difficult one, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

"Our justification is now is a good time - [the] US economy is very strong," Georgieva said in comments monitored by Sputnik.

Georgieva also said that "there are steps that can be taken to reduce the deficit."

However, Georgieva acknowledged that the existing political conditions might make the carrying out of her suggestions very challenging.

"It is clear, not just in the United States or elsewhere in Europe, in other countries, emerging developing economies that taking action to create fiscal space for the future is difficult, politically difficult, [and it is] difficult to bring the public on board."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

IMF Sees Potential for One US Rate Cut in 2024 - Georgieva

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees the potential for one US rate cut in 2024 and further cuts in 2025, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

"When we are looking for the prospects, from our perspective, we still see the potential for one rate cut within 2024. And then, we see potentially further cuts in 2025," Georgieva told reporters.

The IMF chief expressed confidence that the Federal Reserve is not delaying rate cuts.

"What the Fed is doing is to be cautious to go for rate cuts when conditions are right, when there is full confidence that there would be no reversal in inflation," she said.

Georgieva pointed out that it is important both for the US and for the rest of the world.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Financial Literacy to Become Mandatory for California High School Graduation - Statement

SAN FRANCISCO, June 27 (Sputnik) - California Governor Gavin Newsom, Senate President pro-Tempore Mike McGuire and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas announced that an agreement has been reached to mandate financial literacy for high school students to graduate, the Office of Governor said in a statement on Thursday.

"Governor Gavin Newsom, Senate President pro-Tempore Mike McGuire (D-North Coast), Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) and a national financial literacy non-profit - NGPF Mission 2030, an affiliate of Next Gen Personal Finance - today announced an agreement to make financial literacy required content to graduate high school," the statement said.

All California high school students will be required to take a semester-long personal finance course by the 2027-28 school year, the statement said.

However, personal finance becoming a graduation requirement will start with the class of 2030-31, the statement added.

The financial literacy bill aligns with state efforts to prepare students early on for a healthier financial future, according to the statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Pending Home Sales at Record Low, Renewing Caution Over Interest Rates

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Pending home sales in the United States fell to all-time lows in May, a further sign of the impact of high interest rates and how potential buyers of properties were being financially squeezed.

The National Association of Realtors' monthly index for pending home sales was at a hitherto-unseen reading of 70.8 at the close of last month, down 2.1% from April.

"The market is at an interesting point with rising inventory and lower demand," National Association of Realtors' Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said.

Yun also said that buyers have been waiting to act when mortgage rates descend.

Pending home sales reflect transactions where contracts have been signed, without sales being completed. The statistic is one of those used by economists to study the health of the housing market.

May's pending home sales were not just a reflection of contract values being at their lowest since the National Association of Realtors began tracking uncompleted property sales in 2001. Sales also fell for a second month in a row.

Aside from pending home sales, statistics for both new and previously-transacted houses on the market have also tumbled lately. All these point to the impact of burdensome mortgage rates resulting from US interest rates standing at two-decade highs.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage has mostly hovered around 7% this year as stronger-than-expected inflation kept the Federal Reserve from cutting interest rates. The US central bank had previously projected between three and four rate cuts in 2024, raising expectations for a drop in mortgage rates. Buyers awaiting lower rates have, accordingly, held back purchases.

The Fed wants to bring interest rates down but is wary of doing so with the way inflation has been performing.

Inflation, as indicated by the US Consumer Price Index, stood at 3.3% per year in April. That is well above the Fed's 2% per year target.

Interest rates, meanwhile, are at between 5.25% and 5.5% - the highest since 2002. The Fed has four opportunities to cut rates before the year ends on July 31, September 18, November 7 and December 18.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Should Actively Engage With Major Partners to Address Unfair Trade Practices - IMF

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that the United States should engage with major trading partners to address unfair trade practices, supply chain fragilities and national security concerns.

"The US should actively engage with its major trading partners to address the core issues -

including concerns over unfair trade practices, supply chain fragilities and national security - that risk undermining the global trade and investment system," the IMF said in a statement.

The IMF emphasized in the statement that imposing tariffs and nontariff barriers as well as domestic content provisions harm the US economy.

"Tariffs, nontariff barriers and domestic content provisions are not the right solutions since they distort trade and investment flows and risk creating a slippery slope that undermines the multilateral trading system, fragments global supply chains and spurs retaliatory actions by trading partners," the statement said.

Such policies are ultimately bad for US growth, productivity and labor market outcomes and the evidence suggests their costs are largely borne by US consumers and firms, the statement added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Dismisses Trump's Claim About Biden Taking Performance Boosters Before Debate

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The White House deems it unworthy to address claims made by presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump that President Joe Biden will take a performance booster ahead of their first debate, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday.

"I don't think that I should dignify that with an answer," Jean-Pierre said when asked to address the claims made by Trump.

Biden and Trump will participate in their first 2024 election debate in Atlanta, Georgia, which is scheduled at 09:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT) and hosted by the corporate media network CNN.

The debate could set the tone for the remainder of the race leading up to Election Day on November 5. However, the debate could also reportedly mark the end of Biden's campaign.

According to a Gallup poll released earlier on Thursday, US voters favor Donald Trump over Joe Biden as their next president.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Government Debt to Exceed 140% of GDP by 2032 if Current Policies Continue – IMF

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that the US general government debt is set to top 140% of GDP by 2032 if current policies continue.

"Specifically, under current policies, the general government debt is expected to rise steadily and exceed 140 percent of GDP by 2032. Similarly, the general government deficit is expected to remain around 2½ percent of GDP above the levels forecast at the time of the 2019 Article IV consultation," the IMF said in the Staff Concluding Statement of the 2024 Article IV Mission.

The US needs to reverse the ongoing increase in public debt-GDP ratio to avoid a growing risk

to the American and global economy, the IMF stated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Negotiations With N. Korea Not Off Table But Deterrence Only Choice Now - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Negotiations with North Korea are not off the table but the United States has no other choice than to deter Pyongyang, US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Kritenbrink said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"The door to dialogue and the better path remains open, but in the current circumstances, I think, we have no choice but to double down on our deterrent capabilities," Kritenbrink told the US House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Kritenbrink expressed concern over the growing partnership between North Korea and Russia and underscored the importance of the United States' alliances with South Korea and Japan.

"We have to work not just trilaterally but with the broader international community to increase the sanctions we have already imposed on those who are fueling the Russia-DPRK [North Korea] trade," he said.

Kritenbrink also said the United States must increase its deterrent capabilities in order to deter North Korea, especially after it established a strategic partnership with Russia.

On June 19, Russia and North Korea signed the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Pyongyang. The two countries committed to providing military and other assistance if either comes under attack.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Spain, Luxembourg to Begin Providing SATCOM Support to NATO - Defense Department

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Starting next year, Spain and Luxembourg will provide satellite communication services to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Department of Defense said in a release on Thursday.

The project includes four other nations and is called NATO SATCOM Services 6th Generation, or NSS6G, and is designed to provide NATO headquarters with military communications services, said the release.

"These are at varying levels of protection. It's all military satellite communications, which means that it has resistance to nuclear effects and has resistance to jamming capabilities that commercial services generally don't have," said Brian Hughes, the current NSS6G Joint Services management office leader in the international affairs office of the U.S. Space Systems Command.

Spain and Luxembourg will join France, the UK, Italy, and the United States in providing "extremely-high frequency" (EHF) and "super-high frequency" (SHF) transport service for NATO nuclear command and control, the release added.

NSS6G culminated earlier this month when leaders of the oversight agencies in the six countries met near Washington DC and agreed on the final text of the amendment to the memorandum of understanding providing a framework for the project's mechanism of action, said the release.

NATO stopped acquiring and operating its own satellites in 2005 and has been relying on member nations to provide NATO forces with much-needed satellite communications. The US joined the existing team in 2020.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Federal Reserve Should Wait to Reduce Policy Rate Until at Least Late 2024 - IMF

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The US Federal Reserve should not move to cut rates until at least the end of the year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday.

"Despite the important progress to-date in returning inflation toward its 2 percent goal, the Federal Reserve should wait to reduce its policy rate until at least late 2024," the IMF said in the Staff Concluding Statement of the 2024 Article IV Mission.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Inflation Expected to Return to 2% Per Year Target by Mid-2025 - IMF

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that inflation in the United States is expected to return to the 2% per year target by mid-2025.

"PCE [personal consumption expenditures] inflation was 2.7% in April and is expected to return to 2% by mid-2025," the IMF said in a statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Us should engage with major trading partners to address unfair trade practices, supply chain fragilities, national security concerns - imf

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Imposes Iran-Related Sanctions on 3 UAE Firms, 11 Vessels - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on three shipping companies from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and 11 vessels associated with them that have been involved in transporting Iranian oil, the US Department of State said on

Thursday.

"The Department of State is imposing sanctions on three entities involved in the transport of Iranian petroleum and petrochemical products and identifying 11 vessels associated with these entities as blocked property," the State Department said in a press release.

The three entities include Sea Route Ship Management FZE; Almanac Ship Management LLC; and Al Anchor Ship Management FZE, the release said.

The sanctions are being imposed in response to Iran's announcement this past month that it will further expand its nuclear program, the release also said.

The United States is growing concerned with Iran's actions to increase its enrichment capacity, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Says Problem of Aid Distribution in Gaza Persists Amid Security Challenges

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The problem of effective humanitarian aid distribution inside Gaza persists amid real security challenges in the enclave, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"We continue to face the challenge of aid getting to and into Gaza but then not being able to be distributed effectively because principally of real security challenges," Blinken said.

The secretary of state made the comment during a meeting with UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag.

Blinken noted that there has been some progress over the past couple of days by Israel committing to address some of the United Nations' needs to ensure effective delivery of assistance to Gaza residents.

Earlier in June, the United Nations warned that Israel's continued offensive in Gaza and imposed humanitarian access restrictions had further reduced the flow of relief aid.

The United Nations called again for an urgent ceasefire and unfettered humanitarian access to the Palestinian enclave.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Biden Not Considering Pardon for Assange

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is not considering pardoning WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday.

"No, it's not," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing, when asked whether a pardon for Assange is under consideration or being discussed by Biden.

Earlier this week, a US judge sentenced Assange to time served as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors, ending a 14-year-long legal battle.

Assange faced prosecution under the Espionage Act for obtaining and disclosing classified

information that shed light on war crimes and human rights violations committed by US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Considering Sending Israel's Patriot Systems to Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is in talks with Israeli and Ukrainian officials to send Patriot missile systems from Israel to Ukraine, Financial Times reported on Thursday.

Senior US, Israeli and Ukrainian officials have discussed the potential deal, although the arrangement has not been finalized, the report said, citing five people familiar with the talks.

The deal would likely involve transferring the Patriot systems from Israel to the US before sending them to Ukraine, the report said.

In April, Israel said that it planned to begin retiring its eight Patriot batteries and replacing them with newer systems.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Israel-Hezbollah Conflict Looms Amid Gaza Ceasefire Uncertainty - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - A confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah is likely to break out in the next several weeks if Israel and Hamas fail to reach a ceasefire deal in Gaza, Politico reported on Thursday.

According to the report, a war between Israel and Hezbollah could spark a conflict that compels the US to defend Jerusalem, involve the Biden administration more deeply in the region, and risk another humanitarian disaster, straining already stretched aid efforts managing the crisis in Gaza.

Earlier today, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel does not want war with the Lebanese Shia movement Hezbollah but is preparing for any possible scenario.

The minister added that Israel was preparing for "every possible scenario" to bring its citizens back home.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the start of hostilities between Israel and Palestinian movement Hamas in October 2023. The Israeli army and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters, who support Palestine in the conflict with Israel, have regularly exchanged fire across the border since then. On June 18, Israel said it had approved and validated operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NATO Working on Initiative to Help Ukraine Manage Flow of Aid - US Ambassador to NATO

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - NATO is working on an initiative to help Ukraine manage assistance provided by the alliance, US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Thursday.

"Yes. What we've been working on here at NATO headquarters is some sort of new initiative that would allow the NATO alliance to coordinate all of the assistance that's flowing into Ukraine," Smith said in an interview with The Washington Post, when asked whether she could confirm reports of a potential new headquarters for Ukraine to manage military assistance at a US facility in Germany.

The initiative will also help coordinate the training that individual NATO allies have been undertaking in recent months and years, Smith said.

NATO will hold a summit in Washington on July 9-11.

Ukraine will not receive an invitation to join NATO at the summit, Smith said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US House Lawmakers Reject Measures to Cut Ukraine Support

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Thursday rejected a series of amendments to the fiscal year 2025 State Department appropriations bill to reduce support for Ukraine.

House lawmakers rejected an amendment by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene to prohibit funding to Ukraine in a vote of 70 in favor and 342 opposed.

Lawmakers also rejected an amendment by Congressman Paul Gosar to ban funding to approve of Foreign Military Sales to Ukraine in a vote of 61 in favor and 350 opposed.

Moreover, lawmakers rejected an amendment by Gosar to prohibit funding for the US-Ukraine Bilateral Security Agreement in a vote of 76 in favor and 334 opposed.

An amendment by Gosar to prohibit funding for the Special Representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery also failed in a vote of 109 in favor and 303 opposed.

The House of Representatives is considering numerous amendments to the State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill, as well as the Defense Department appropriations bill this week.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NATO Does Not Consider Itself Party to Ukraine Conflict - US Ambassador to Alliance

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The NATO alliance does not view itself as a party to the conflict in Ukraine, US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Thursday.

"NATO is not a party to this conflict. NATO is not directly involved. NATO does not have troops on the ground in Ukraine," Smith said in an interview with The Washington Post.

NATO countries have provided billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery

munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden, Trump Call Each Other Threat to Democracy Ahead of First Debate

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden and presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump on Thursday exchanged accusations ahead of their first debate that the other is a threat to American democracy.

"Joe Biden is a threat to democracy and a threat to the survival and existence of our country itself," Trump wrote on the social media platform Truth Social.

Biden posted via X that "Trump's assault on democracy isn't just part of his past... it's what he is promising for the future."

The two will participate in their first 2024 election debate in Atlanta, Georgia, which is scheduled at 09:00 p.m. EST (01:00 GMT) and hosted by the corporate media network CNN.

According to a Gallup poll released earlier on Thursday, US voters favor Donald Trump over Joe Biden as their next president.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, ROK Should Collaborate to Take Advantage of Military Drones, Robotics—Defense Official

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The United States and the Republic of Korea should work together to take advantage of military drones and ground robotics in future conflicts after learning from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, US Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush said on Thursday.

"Thinking of future tech, there are many areas for potential cooperation. We are trying to go as fast as we can to take advantage of drones and new unmanned aircraft technologies. We could obviously work together. There is also ground robotics, an increasing area of interest for the United States because of what we're seeing in Ukraine. We want to make a major effort to have more ground robotics in our formations," Bush said during a discussion hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Besides drones and robotics, the United States could cooperate with South Korea on artificial intelligence and advanced communications, Bush added.

In March, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George said that the US Army will incorporate machines and robotics into military formations to perform various warfighting functions more cheaply and effectively. According to George, the US military will use robotics on the ground and in the air.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UNSC Adopts Resolution Extending Request for Monthly Reports on Houthi Maritime Attacks

UNITED NATIONS, June 27 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution that extends the request for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to provide written monthly reports on Houthi attacks against commercial vessels until January 2025, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

Russia abstained from the vote on the resolution drafted by the United States and Japan.

"The hastily drawn up draft had a number of serious flaws in terms of international law, and included a number of provisions, which some Western countries subsequently attempted to interpret in their own way to justify attacks on Yemen," Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said during a UN Security Council meeting.

The document recalls all relevant resolutions on the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea, including resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2722 (2024). The resolution also condemns the ongoing Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Liberal Lawmakers Want Trudeau to Call Caucus Meeting After Byelection Defeat - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - Liberal lawmakers are frustrated with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over the unexpected electoral loss in the Toronto-St. Paul byelection and would like him to convene a national caucus meeting, CBC News reported on Thursday.

Liberal lawmakers are calling on Trudeau to convene the meeting as soon as possible and preferably before the House of Commons session resumes in September, the report said.

If the party waits until September to regroup and reset, it would be writing its obituary, one lawmaker, who spoke on condition of anonymity, was quoted as saying.

The lawmakers characterized the election loss as being an unmitigated disaster, which occurred despite the Liberal party pouring in all resources to effect a different outcome.

The loss is a wake-up call and the prime minister must understand that the current mix of strategy and policy is dysfunctional, requiring a course correction, the lawmakers said.

While it is up to Trudeau to decide whether he would continue to lead the Liberals or resign, a new leader would breathe life into the party, the lawmakers added.

On Tuesday, Elections Canada announced that Conservative candidate Don Stewart had won the Toronto-St. Paul federal byelection. The seat had been held by the Liberals for more than 30 years and was considered to be one of the politically "safest."

Following the byelection, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault reiterated their support for Trudeau, saying he would lead the Liberals in the next election scheduled to take place on or before October 20, 2025.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE - US Supreme Court Dismisses Idaho Abortion Case, Allows Emergency Abortions - Filing

(Updates with more details in paras 9, 10)

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a case regarding Idaho's state-level abortion restrictions, allowing doctors to perform emergency abortions for the time being.

The Idaho law banned abortions except in cases where the procedure would be necessary to prevent the death of a pregnant woman.

The federal government challenged the law, contending that the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requires Medicare-funded hospitals to provide essential care to patients experiencing medical emergencies.

The government argued that EMTALA preempts the Idaho law in cases where an abortion is needed to prevent serious health harms.

The Supreme Court lifted its stay on an injunction blocking the law, sending the case back to lower courts for further consideration with the injunction in place.

"With this Court's writ of certiorari dismissed, the lower courts can proceed with this litigation in the regular course. And with this Court's stay dissolved, the District Court's preliminary injunction will again take effect. That will prevent Idaho from enforcing its abortion ban when the termination of a pregnancy is needed to prevent serious harms to a woman's health," Justice Elena Kagan said in a concurring opinion on the order.

Justice Samuel Alito filed a dissenting opinion, in which he called the preemption theory unsound. EMTALA demands that Medicare-funded hospitals protect the health of both a pregnant woman and her unborn child, Alito said.

The Supreme Court regrettably lost the will to decide the "easy but emotional and highly politicized question" presented in the case, Alito added.

President Joe Biden issued a statement praising the decision and criticizing state-level restrictions on abortion, which gained ground after the Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision in 2022.

The Biden administration is committed to defending access to abortion and will continue to fight to restore Roe v. Wade protections in federal law, the statement said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Supreme Court Dismisses Idaho Abortion Case, Allows Emergency Abortions - Filing

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a case regarding Idaho's state-level abortion restrictions, allowing doctors to perform emergency abortions for the time being.

The Idaho law banned abortions except in cases where the procedure would be necessary to prevent the death of a pregnant woman.

The US federal government challenged the law, contending that the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requires Medicare-funded hospitals to provide essential care to patients experiencing medical emergencies.

The government argued that EMTALA preempts the Idaho law in cases where an abortion is needed to prevent serious health harms.

The Supreme Court lifted its stay on an injunction blocking the law, sending the case back to lower courts for further consideration with the injunction in place.

"With this Court's writ of certiorari dismissed, the lower courts can proceed with this litigation in the regular course. And with this Court's stay dissolved, the District Court's preliminary injunction will again take effect. That will prevent Idaho from enforcing its abortion ban when the termination of a pregnancy is needed to prevent serious harms to a woman's health," Justice Elena Kagan said in a concurring opinion on the order.

Justice Samuel Alito filed a dissenting opinion, in which he called the preemption theory unsound. EMTALA demands that Medicare-funded hospitals protect the health of both a pregnant woman and her unborn child, Alito said.

The Supreme Court regrettably lost the will to decide the "easy but emotional and highly politicized question" presented in the case, Alito added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Audit Says \$62.2Mln in Sensitive Defense Articles for Ukraine 'Lost or Destroyed'

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – Ukrainian armed forces (UAF) told the Pentagon that about \$62 million worth of sensitive defense articles provided by the US between March 2022 and November 2023 were either "lost or destroyed," the US Defense Department's Office of Inspector General said in a new report, parts of which were redacted.

The lost defense articles were designated for enhanced end-use monitoring (EEUM) because they incorporate sensitive technologies that the Pentagon does not want to be captured by or transferred to an adversary.

"As of November 26, 2023, a total \$62.2 million in EEUM-designated items have been reported as lost or destroyed, according to the UAF's reporting to the US European Command's (USEUCOM) Office of Defense Cooperation in Ukraine," the Pentagon Inspector General said in its report.

In total, Ukrainian forces had lost 2,122 EEUM-designated defense articles by November 26, 2023, the report said.

During the initial period from March 1, 2022 to July 31, 2023, the lost or destroyed defense articles were valued at about \$22.9 million, all but \$147,414 worth of which were night vision goggles.

However, the Pentagon took steps to improve reporting in the ensuing period from August 1, 2023 to November 26, 2023, and Ukrainian forces reported that a "wider variety" of EEUM-designated articles valued at approximately \$29.3 million were either lost or destroyed,

including Javelin missiles and missile launch units, the Inspector General said.

Moreover, the report also found that the Ukrainians had significant problems providing loss reports to Pentagon personnel in a timely fashion. "The average time for all loss notifications and loss reports, from defense article loss to loss notification or report production, was 301 days," it said. This is "greatly exceeded" relevant requirements, the report said.

The Pentagon auditor also concluded that US European Command (USEUCOM) failed to analyze the information it received from Ukrainian armed forces "to assess the UAF's ability to protect sensitive technologies."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canadian Defense Ministry Working on Evacuation Plans Amid Lebanon Escalation - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 27 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Ministry of National Defense is developing evacuation plans for Canadians as tensions between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah movement continue to grow, CTV News reported on Thursday.

On Tuesday, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly urged Canadians to leave Lebanon as soon as possible given the increasingly volatile and unpredictable situation, and potential challenges in providing consular service in the event of a full-fledged conflict.

"In support of Global Affairs Canada CAF personnel are currently assisting the Canadian embassy in Lebanon with contingency planning," the Canadian defense ministry said in the report.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the resumption of hostilities between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas in October 2023. The Israeli army and the Lebanese Hezbollah, which supports Palestine in the conflict with Israel, have regularly exchanged fire across the border since then.

Last week, Israel said it had approved and validated operational plans for a military offensive in Lebanon. On Saturday, US media reported that the United States reassured Israel of its complete support in the event of a war with Hezbollah.

The United States does not want a full-scale war between Israel and Lebanon and is using diplomacy to prevent this from happening, National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Wednesday.